



# NEWS RELEASE

## Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

---

March 28, 2001

Contact: Karen Redmond

### **2001 Director's Awards Honor Efforts of Three in Federal Courts**

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has announced the winners of the 2001 Director's Awards, the federal courts' highest awards for employees. "Each year, our awards for Outstanding Leadership and for Excellence in Court Operations recognize those exceptional employees who have gone beyond the individual requirements of their jobs to improve the federal Judiciary," said Administrative Office Director Leonidas Ralph Mecham. "It is due to their efforts that the federal court system continues to expand customer service, while cutting costs and working more efficiently." All of the Judiciary's approximately 26,000 employees may be nominated for the annual awards. A panel reviews nominations and forwards its finalists to Director Mecham for his approval. The panel was composed this year of Judge Douglas Ginsburg of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, Judge Thomas Hogan of the District Court for the District of Columbia, and Alton C. Ressler, Assistant Director of the Office of Human Resources and Statistics at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

The **2001 Director's Award for Excellence in Court Operations**, recognizes outstanding achievements in improving the operation of federal courts. Winning nominations must be for a specific operations improvement that resulted in cost savings, increased productivity, improved customer service and judicial efficiencies. This year's award recipient is **Barry G. Wells**, automation division manager for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, based in Alexandria, Virginia.

**Barry Wells** is the creator of FINSYS, a system that has changed the way over 80 court units across the country record, track, manage and report receipt data and preparation of bankruptcy trustee data. FINSYS made possible the switch from accounting on paper to a more efficient and accurate automated method. This switch has provided a savings in staff time with the elimination of hand written receipts, the ability to easily record payments and balances without having to track them manually, and the ability to quickly review and research applicable financial activities with automated reports. FINSYS also provides a platform for additional capabilities, that include automated trustee and judge selection and the scheduling of 341 meetings. Unclaimed funds and fee amounts are easier to track and monitor with FINSYS.

Wells also has implemented various programs that add to the court's efficiency and improve customer service. These include integrated Internet access for NIBS and Case Management/Electronic Case Files

(MORE)

information, and automated case management that provides automatic discharge, applicable local rule dismissals, and full case closing entries. He also has added a full text search feature to on-line opinions to increase ease of access by the public.

The **2001 Director's Award for Outstanding Leadership**, given this year to two recipients, recognizes managerial employees who have made long-term contributions to increase program effectiveness or reduce administrative costs. The 2001 recipients are **Michael E. Gans**, clerk of court for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and **Joseph A. Giacobbe**, Chief U.S. Probation Officer for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of New York. Gans is based in St. Louis, Missouri. Giacobbe is based in Buffalo, New York.

**Michael E. Gans**, clerk of court for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, receives the 2001 Outstanding Leadership Award for a number of innovations in the circuit that have increased public access to information, reduced costs, and streamlined court procedures. Gans also has exhibited outstanding organizational abilities, leadership and professionalism. Thanks to improvements introduced by Gans, the public can view briefs, hear oral arguments, and read opinions on a single website. He developed the first electronic noticing program in the appellate court system, which allows counsel to receive all court notices, orders, opinions, calendars, and correspondence by e-mail or fax. The system also saves postage costs and staff time, and allows the timely processing of cases. He implemented the digital recording of oral arguments, which are placed on the court's website the same day of argument, as are court opinions. Gans prepares daily summaries of each opinion. In addition, briefs in cases filed are on the court's website, thanks to changes Gans proposed to the court's local rules. He also played a key role in the planning and construction of the new federal courthouse in St. Louis, MO. Gans also serves as the clerk to the Bankruptcy Appellate Panel, and is chair of the Appellate Clerks Advisory Council.

**Joseph A. Giacobbe**, Chief U.S. Probation Officer for the Western District of New York, receives the 2001 Outstanding Leadership Award for improvements to national operations of the U.S. probation and pretrial services system. He was instrumental in developing a national training guide for new employees. He helped set up a process that gives probation and pretrial services officers in all the districts in New York information from the criminal records database in the New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services – a process that once took months, but now takes place within 24 hours of an arrest. Under his guidance, the Western District of New York developed a computer-based random urinalysis program that reduces urine collection by 50 percent per offender. With this urinalysis program, although the number of offenders from 1996 through 2000 increased by over 300 percent, the cost has not. Thanks to a financial investigation team formed by Giacobbe and subsequent improvements to the fines and restitution collection, the district in fiscal year 2000 reported a 100 percent increase over the collections in FY 1999. In addition, Giacobbe has improved court services and increased productivity through the initiation of a wide range of programs. He also has served on the national Joint Advisory Council and the District Court Advisory Council.